

NATIONAL YOUTH IN AGROECOLOGICAL BUSINESS MENTORSHIP TRAJECTORY, 2021-2022.

“Growing Agroecology businesses 4sustainable food systems”

1.0 Background:

Africa has the youngest population in the world and each year 10-12 million of its young people seek to enter the continent’s workforce, too many without success. This highlights the great challenge of youth unemployment but can also be seen as an opportunity for them to become the engine driving new agribusiness enterprises as well as rural transformation (*UN Economic Commission for Africa, 2015*).

So, the world needs young people who are proactively contributing to innovative and economically sustainable Agroecological business development. With the rapid urbanization and unpredictable weather events in the agri-food sector. There is a need for a generation of young leaders empowered, nurtured and mentored to create sustainable agribusiness employment opportunities and are able to take on the mantle in transforming food systems.

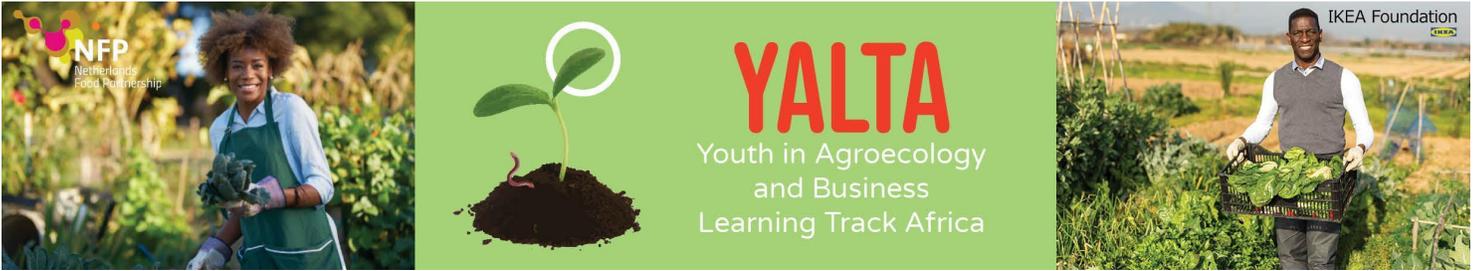
We also see youth as crucial players since there will be no sustainable, future-proof food systems without youth as a major driver, yet the involvement of youth in agroecology is still limited. Therefore; to effectively realize a transition towards sustainable food systems with solid business opportunities for youth, there is a need for matching and connecting young people with business experts/mentors that can handhold them to realize their business dreams/goals. Therefore; increased investment in mentoring youth along the agroecological value chains will give birth to a young generation that is economically empowered, self-sustaining and with improved livelihoods.

2.0 Justification for Yalta AE business mentorship Trajectory:

During the year 2020, YALTA (Youth in Agroecology & Business Learning Track Africa) initiative targeting more than 6,000 youth in Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and Rwanda, commissioned a survey to among others identify main challenges that youth face as they make an effort to find a livelihood in agriculture. One of the study findings indicated that; whereas Agriculture as one of the key identified sectors that can generate wealth, with high employment potential (*Uganda Vision 2040*), it is on record that youth involvement was still very low due to among others limited access to business mentorship programs that could help them with skills to start, manage and sustain agribusinesses. It was further revealed that only 20% of the youth led initiatives would be able to celebrate their 5th birthday. Meaning that; a few that try and start small businesses, after one or two years, they collapse and do not survive beyond 5 years (*National Development Plan III 2020-2025*).

This is exacerbated by many youth lacking access to key resources like; experienced persons (business mentors) and skilled personnel to navigate them through Business management best practices in pursuit

“Inspiring youth into agroecology business”



to realizing their business ambitions. So, what the majority of the youth do is to migrate to urban centers that promise more lucrative economic opportunities, often only to join the ranks of the large group of unemployed Youth. If this trend continues, food insecurity and limited economic development is a stark reality for many youth and thus depriving rural communities of their most energetic and best human resources. **Quote: we are in business but can't access mentors, they are nowhere to find them, said one of the Caravan participants.**

It is against such a background that; YALTA initiative has developed a one-year (2021-2022) mentorship trajectory targeting to support over 160 (80 female and 80 male) young agripreneurs that participated in the recently concluded National Youth in Agroecology Caravan 2021 in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and Ethiopia. This trajectory is aimed at providing individual (youth) support on topics regarding the application of agroecological principles for enhanced business growth with socio-economic and environmental benefits.

3.0 Objectives:

- Equip youth with skills and tools to start, manage and sustain agroecology businesses
- Guide young people to discover, define, develop and deliver AE produced products and services on the market

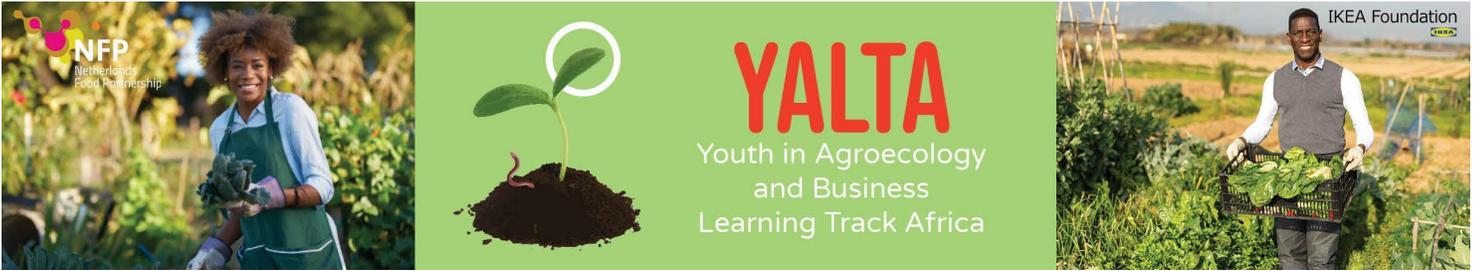
3.1 Outcomes:

- Improved capacity of youth to apply AE principles
- Youth gain skills and techniques in AE business management
- Youth receive practical insights on how to develop business plans
- Youth gain insights on how to promote their AE services and products to potential investors/financiers - impact investors and consumers

4.0 Target audience:

4.1 Mentees:

The mentorship will bring together over 160 (**each Country with not less than 40**) youth mentees both female and male between the ages of 18-35, rural and urban, start-ups and progressive entrepreneurs in the agri-food sector especially those involved in **production, value addition, agro-input supply and agro-processing and agricultural services**. Priority going to those who participated in the recently concluded National Youth in Agroecology Caravan, 2021. However; we will also give an opportunity to the general public to apply for this same mentorship opportunity. More specifically, the mentorship targets; innovators, marketers, youth leaders who are already passionate and motivated about their businesses and are ready to be change makers in developing sustainable and scalable agroecological business models – they do not need to be agroecology practitioners as of yet.



4.2 Mentors:

Well knowing that; behind every successful business story there is a mentor, therefore; the mentorship will bring together over 20 (**each Country with not less than 5**) seasoned business and AE experts (male and female) driven by passion and are available to walk the Agroecology business journey with youth; through mentoring, coaching, creating strategic networks that will make youth Agroecology business ideas a reality. Mentors' role will be to facilitate the development of the human resource capital (mentees) in order to enhance professional business growth, a strong and resilient youth led agroecology businesses with a clear mindset to be change makers in the food systems.

5.0 Methodology Approaches of delivery:

It should be noted that; each mentor will be matched with not less than 8 and not more than 10 youth for each cluster. These clusters will be formed dependent on the mentorship needs of youth visa via the mentor's areas of expertise and probably location. Now in order to achieve a smooth delivery of this mentorship trajectory, we have identified 2 mentoring approaches and types of mentoring to clearly guide the process.

5.1 Approaches of mentoring:

- **Face-to-face mentoring.**

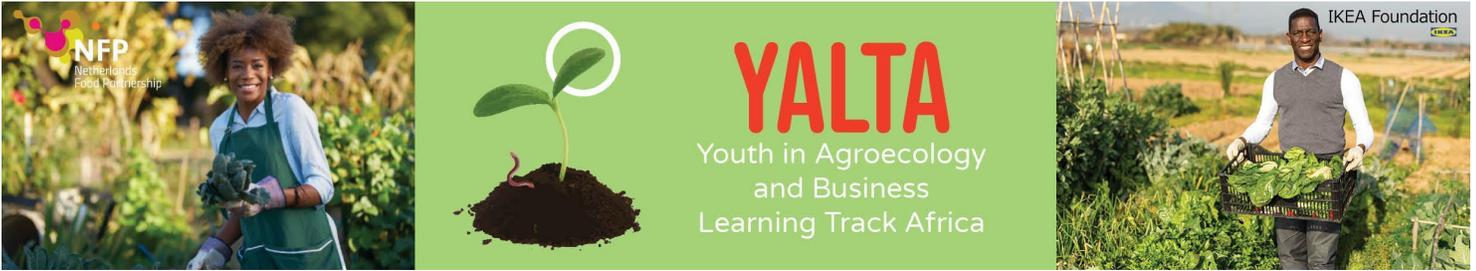
In a period of 12 months (June 2021 to June 2022), we will expect mentors to organize at least not less than 4 face to face sessions with mentees. Well knowing this is very important in building a rapport and it fosters strong relationships between participants (mentor & mentee). Also, this is to help the mentor to understand the mentee's local business operation context. This can be on a one-on-one or group mentoring basis as it allows in-depth and streamlined processes.

- **Online/remote/virtual mentoring.**

With the increased appreciation of digital inclusion in our daily communication, using the available online channels has become normal especially in the "new normal era". We will therefore; encourage you to take advantage and conduct mentorship sessions using channels such as zoom, skype, google meets, what's up, teleconferencing among others as may be agreed between the mentor and mentee. This can be on a one-on-one or group mentoring basis as it allows in-depth and streamlined processes.

6.0 Next STEPS:

- **Mobilisation/Online call:** an online application and together with TORs will be shared to the potential mentors in the public domain, within a deadline of two weeks period.



- **Screening and Selection:** After the application process has been closed, and using the developed selection criteria, we will first screen all the applications to make sure they adhere to the eligibility criteria. And each country will pick the best 5 as per our initial budget. A consideration given to both female and male mentors.
- **Half day face to face Training of the selected Mentors and half day virtual training of the selected mentees:** we shall have a half day orientation training by an expert to help mentors in understanding what type of skills the young people need at each stage of mentoring relationship. Alos a half day virtual training for mentees will be organised to make them understand what they have to expect from mentors.